# [Humbolt Casad]

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Anthony, New Mexico

2600 words.

Old Timers Dictionary in Detail.

As I [aaproached?] approached the Humboldt Casad home, west of Canutillo, I gave the evenly cultivated land an admiring glance, thinking: If I had a rancher I should want the land to look just like that.

The Casads were at home and greeted me, as is their custom, in a friendly dignified manner. When I told them my mission they both smiled, and promised to give me the information I sought. “Just what do you wish to know?” was Mr. Casad's polite inquiry. [?]

“Something about the Brazito Grant,” I replied. “I have been told by an old-timer, Mrs. Gardner of Berino, that your father used to own it.” [H. Hier.?]

“Not all of the Grant,” he corrected. “My father owned the two upper thirds, or about 21 thousand acres. The Brazito Grant dates back to 1836. It was given to Juan Antonio Garcia by Spain for protecting travelers from the Apache and other tribes of Indians. Garcia provided them with armed escorts as far as Dona Ana. My informant was one of the Garcia family. Hugh Stevens married one of the Garcia girls, and we bought our section of the Brazito property from his brothers, Albert and Horace Stevens. In 1854 the land was surveyed by Steven Archer, and in the same year, confirmed by Congress. C 18 Y

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“How long did your family keep the Brazito Grant?” I inquired.

“Oh, for a number of years,” he replied. “Then we sold it to Frank Smith and a man by the name of Hadley for 64,000 dollars, with one fourth down. The one fourth down was all we ever received; so we foreclosed. And the court adjudged us about 8,000 dollars. Then we sold it to Dr. Boyd, the first man interested in the Elephant Butte Dam. He bought it for an English syndicate. Finally it came back to us again, and we sold it for fifty thousand. The last man we sold it to was a fellow by the name of Galaher. As far as Brazito is concerned that let us out. But we had to pay back taxes to the amount of 4,000 dollars. “In what year did your family come west?” I asked.

“We arrived in Old Mesilla December 14, 1874, And It was snowing.” Mr. Casad smiled.

“And almost Christmas,” I observed.

“Yes, and it meant a great deal to me, for I was only six. We had a hard time finding a suitable place to live, but finally found what we wanted, in the house of Jules Generette, a Frenchman. Then, when spring arrived, we moved into our own home. “How long did you live in Old Mesilla?” I queried.

“Thirty-two years. My father, Thomas Casad, established 3 the first flour mill,” he explained. “It was located at Chamberino. He also ran a newspaper. Now then, what else?”

Undaunted by his brusk, but good-natured question, I came right back at him with: “Who were the principal merchants?”

“Well, the stores, were owned by Renolds and Griggs—”

“Pardon me,” I broke in, “was the last man you mentioned related to our Historian, George Griggs?”

“His father.”

“Thanks, go on.” Instead of going on, he got,up, crossed the room and sat down again, but in a chair intimately close to Mrs. Casad.“ This chair” he apologized, “is more comfortable.”

“I believe you were saying,” I prompted.

“That the stores were owned by Renolds and Griggs,” he repeated, Lesinsky brothers, Tolly and Ochoa, Thomas Casad, Hayward and McGroty, Frudenthal brothers, Zaniosky and Company, Thomas Bull, Mariano Barela, Gonzalez brothers and Blame Duran. All of their merchandise was freighted by wagon train from Colorado and other points. The freighters drove ox teams and mules.”

“How interesting!” I exclaimed. “Did you have bullfights?”

“Yes. Also cock fights, bowling alleys, fiestas and street fairs. Saloons, of course, gambling houses, billiard halls, and theaters. Those were exciting days. A regular pageant of nondescript people, coming and going, all the time. I have but to close my eyes to live it all over again. The shouting teamsters 4 anxious to be off; the snap of lashing whips on the backs of sleepy animals; the sing-song voices of venders crying, 'tamales, tortillos, dulcies!’ And whining beggars squatted on every corner with outstretched hands.” “How did the Mexicans dress?” I inquired.

“In a very picturesque manner,” he answered. “They wore brilliant sarapes with more stripes then the rainbow. They knew more about keeping cool in the summer than we did though. At times I actually envied their thin, unbleached; muslin suits. They wore sandals but no socks. Mr. Mexican didn' mind the sand. In fact I believe he enjoyed wiggling it between his toes; sort of an old Spanish custom. “You forget to mention their sombreros,” I observed.

“Oh, yes, they were quite large,” he said.

“But how large?” I persisted.

“Well,” he retorted, his blue eyes twinkling, “I should judge their capacity was about five gallon.”

Following my interview with Humboldt Casad I had occasion to visit Old Mesilla. It was the first day of March, the feast of St. Albans, or Alvino. Mass was over and the visiting bishop led the procession in which the Santo, or statue of St. Albans, was carried through the streets. The rest of the day was spent in feasting, prominading, music and dancing.

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In the early days the Santa Fe Chihuahua Trail ran through Old Mesilla, a route which traders began to travel about 1831. At that date the land belonged to Old Mexico. Then the Mexican Government took a notion to colonize, offering each colonist a solor for a residence in the village and fifty-four acres for a rancher. This was known as the “ Mesilla Civil Colony Grant . “And the village which sprang up in its wake was known as Mesilla Chihuahua. When I asked George Griggs, Historian, and a resident of Old Mesilla about the early history of his town, he opened one of his books and said:

“See here lady—I have it all written out in my ‘History of the Mesilla Valley.’ Buy this book and read for yourself lady. See what it says. You read—no I shall tell you—it says lady that The Mesilla Civil Colony Grant was made to those Mexicans citizens who did not want to become citizens of the United States.”

“Who was the first governor, or alcalde, of La Mesilla?” I asked.

“Don Rafael, lady. His descendants still live in this community.” As I was saying,lady. All of those Mexicans who were not satisfied with the American government flocked from all parts of New Mexico and Southern Colorado to be an native Mexican soil again. See what

Mrs. Stoes says about it. Read her article right here in my book. Read lady—no just a minute—I shall tell you:

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They came in carts, wagons, carretas, on burros, mules, horses and on foot. Mostly pilgrims, footsore and weary, but rejoicing, lady, to again become Mexican citizens. And La Mesilla, which means seat, lady, became a booming Mexican colony. You will buy my book lady? A little bit soiled, lady, but you may have it for half price." "You have quite a collection in your museum," I observed.

"Yes, lady. Come look—see lady—here is a bible. This bible, lady, is a thousand years old. See what it says." He rustled the yellow leaves, moistened a finger with his lips, and stamped one of the pages. "There, read lady. What does it say?"

If I fail to repeat verbatim, I shall blame it on the faded print in the old bible, and the dimming light in the museum. This is what I read: "They were without clothes; so they made themselves a cover of fig leaves."

"now this one lady." He rustled the leaven and stamped a second page. "Read."

"They were without clothes; so they made themselves an apron of fig leaves."

"Rustle, rustle." I waited for the stamp act, then proceeded to read a third page: "They were without clothes; so they made themselves breeches of fig leaves."

"See, lady. All three are different. On one page they made themselves a cover of fig leaves; on the second page they made themselves an apron of fig leaves; on the third page they made themselves breeches of fig leaves."

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He spoke rapidly and fingered his pointed beard as he moved restlessly from place to place; pointing out, explaining (briefly) and leaving my thoughts in a state of confusion.

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George Griggs is the author of several books. His “Billy the Kid Museum” is an interesting place with [curios?] from all over the world. The architecture of the old building is strictly Spanish. Swords from Spain, England, France, Africa, Japan, China, Germany, Ireland and other countries adorn the walls. And among his collection is the long slender rapier; the short broad cutlass; (American) the blunt foil with button; and the rare Toledo blade. I recall these swords because I am familiar with them. I shall not attempt to name the foreign swords with their peculiar designs, for if I spelled them as they sounded to me, nobody would understand them anyway; so what's the use? “See, lady.” Mr. Griggs called my attention to a brace of ugly guns. “These are six-shooters, and belonged to the notorious outlaw, Billy the Kid, or William Bonney. He was a bad number, lady.”

“Was he as bad as he was painted?” I inquired.

“Twenty times worse!” he exclaimed. “Listen lady. It was his ambition to be bad. Over in the plaza is the jail where he was imprisoned. You have seen it, lady?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“At the age of twelve, lady. This boy was an expert poker 8 player and a monte dealer.”

“How did he become a killer?” I asked.

“I will tell you that in a moment. But first, please lady, your entrance fee. Thanks lady. Everything you wish to know is right here in my book. You will buy my book, lady?”

“Yes.”

“Thanks, lady. As I was going to tell you lady. Everything is right here. It begins on page 117. Read for yourself—but no—just a minute, lady—I shall tell you. The Kid's real name was Bonney, William E. Bonney. He went to Georgetown, New Mexico, with his father, mother, and fifteen year old sister.”

“Where was he born?”

“New York, lady. November 23, 1859. And as I was saying. They went to Georgetown. Shortly after arriving in Georgetown, the Kid's father was killed by Apaches. Billy swore vengence, lady. And Mrs. Bonney took in boarders. Then a miner made love to the Kid's sister, and persuaded her to run away. Billy followed them and told the miner to marry his sister. But you see lady, it couldn't be done. For the miner had a wife and six children in Texas. That's where the trouble began. Billy bought a six-shooter, and the miner was his first victim.”

“Old Timer”, I said, “didn't you used to be a cowpuncher?”

“Yes-um.” He spoke slowly, but his cowboy drawl, if he ever had one, must have gone the way of the Old West.

“I happen to be in the mood for a good cowboy yarn,” I said.

“An' I'd hate to disappoint you,” he flipped back. “Of course you know them ain't my intentions. As soon as I finish my yarn, 9 Tim kin tell you one. When Tim finishes his yarn, Sam kin tell you one. You see, Mrs. us three used to cowpunch for the same ranche.” “Three yarns instead of one!” I exclaimed, “This must be my lucky day.”

“Well, to begin,” be said, “me an' Nate Smith was on our way across the Jornada de Muerto, or Journey of Death to help on a round-up. I rode on while Nate detoured to get some water from a spring above us. When I saw him again his face was as white as the wings of an angel.

“Nate,” says I, ‘what in th' world ails you?’

“ ‘Gawd!’ is all he said, as he mopped his forehead with the back of his hand.

“What th' hell is it?’ I shouted, shovin' my flask into his hand.

He took a big gulp of th' whiskey, cleared his throat, an' said: “Pard I thought my time had come. After I left you an' struck th' trail to th' spring, I saw shod tracks. As I started to dismount to examine 'em I heard some hombre whistle between his teeth. My hand swept to my colts, but I didn't draw. He had me covered. My eyes streaked the length of his rifle and stopped, where his face was framed, in th' lemita bush above. I couldn't see his eyes —they were shaded with his hat. Part of his face was hidden, too, by a curtain of black cloth.”

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“Turn aroun' an' go back?, he said. ‘Nothin' up here you want.’

“[As?] Nate finished his story I looked at him an' said: “Nate what caliber gun did that hombre aim at you?”

“ ‘I dunno for shore,’ he drawled. ‘At first I thought it was a 30-30, but before I could get my horse turned aroun' damn if I didn't think I could crawl through it.’ As the first cowboy finished his yarn the second cowboy, or Tim, rolled a cud of tobacco out of his mouth into his hand, dropped it into his coat pocket and began:

“Ah had t' cross th' Hornady ounc't me-sef. Hit shore was a lonesome desert. Ah wasn't goin' t' no round-up nuther. Ah was sarchin fer a stolen hoss. Ah heerd he wus up at Goldenberg Springs; so ah headed that way. Hit wus 'bout eleven when ah got thar, an' ah wus plum' tuckered out. Wall, ah sarched everywhar fer thet dim-blistered hoss. An' ask several o' th cowpunchers at th' rancher ef they'd saw my hoss, but nary one o' th' lot hed.”

“Then what did you do?” I quizzed.

“Who, me? Wall, ah'll tell yuh. Ah figured th' thief would fotch th' stolen hoss t' th' spring fer a drink; so ah got down on my hands an' knees an' clared th' sand till hit wus tolable smooth.”

“What was the big idea?”

“Shod tracks, mam. When summer comes along th' rancher ponies are turned out on th' range 'thout shoes. At thet time th' 11 country was full o' outlaws an' hoss thieves. Thet's th' way we trailed 'em. Ez ah wus sayin' ah brushed th' sand aroun' th' spring an' left. When ah got back th' fust thing ah noticed wus fresh shod tracks. Arter ah hed trailed them thar tracks fer ‘bout two hundred foot, ah halted, dead cold, with chills playin' tag up an' down my spine. Ah'd bin watched. Hit whoren't no hunch, nuther. Ah jes knowed ah'd bin watched. Fer [that?] on th' groun' wus th' circumstantial evidentials.” “What was it—what did you find?” I eagerly inquired.

Cigarette stumps, ‘bout ten o' 'em. An' a bullet—a bullet from a six-gun.”

“What did you do?” My voice had sunk to a whisper.

“What any sensible cowboy would hev did—ah dropped th' trail.” “And here's where ole man Sam picks it up; cigarettes, shod tracks, six-gun bullets and all. Every body bleets about th' Jornada de Muerto, or Journey of Death,” said the third cowboy. So I guess I'll sell yuh my lament.” It sho was a waterless stretch of territory to cross, and a hell of a trip in th' summer time. But if a fellow knowed his onions he could make it in a day. The first well ever dug in that part of the country was at a place called 'detroit.’ Folks didn' have very good drilling tools in them days; so they never drilled more then fifty or sixty feet.” “Shucks, that ain't no yarn. I think you'd better take lessons from Tim,” was the first cowboy's suggestion.

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“He's jes gettin' his second wind,” said Tim, with a chuckle.

Sam paid no attention to their raillery, but rolled a cigarette, licked it, placed it between his concaved lips, and squatted cowboy fashion.

“Now,” he said, here goes. One day the boss sent me across the Jornada with some cattle for another rancher. They had butchered that day and were just hangin' up their beefs when I arrived. That same night, from the bunk house where I slept, I heard a big commotion outside. Gettin’, up, I went to the door and looked out. It was moonlight and clear as day.”

“What kid you see,” Tim chuckled, “a real live ghost?”

“No, three bad hombres stealin' meat. When I ask 'em what they were doin' the short fat one retorted;

“Hepin' ourselves to a mess o' beef. You'd better go on back t' bed whar yuh belong.’

“What did you do?” I inquired.

“I went.”

“And damn pronto,” came from the chuckling Tim.

“What th' hell do you know about it?” Sam demanded.

“Ah wus jes one o' th' three hombres thet took th' beef thet wus stole from our herds.”